

March - April 2021 Issue

The Wildlife Clubs' bulletin

As March is the month of spring we thought we would spring to life amazing stories of our wildlife club patrons, members and club officer who recount their interests, calling and sacrifices they have made and continue to make for education in wildlife and environmental conservation.

Our next issue will be on bonding over books and how the 'Ole Peenko's Journey and other stories' book is helping club members better understand conservation.



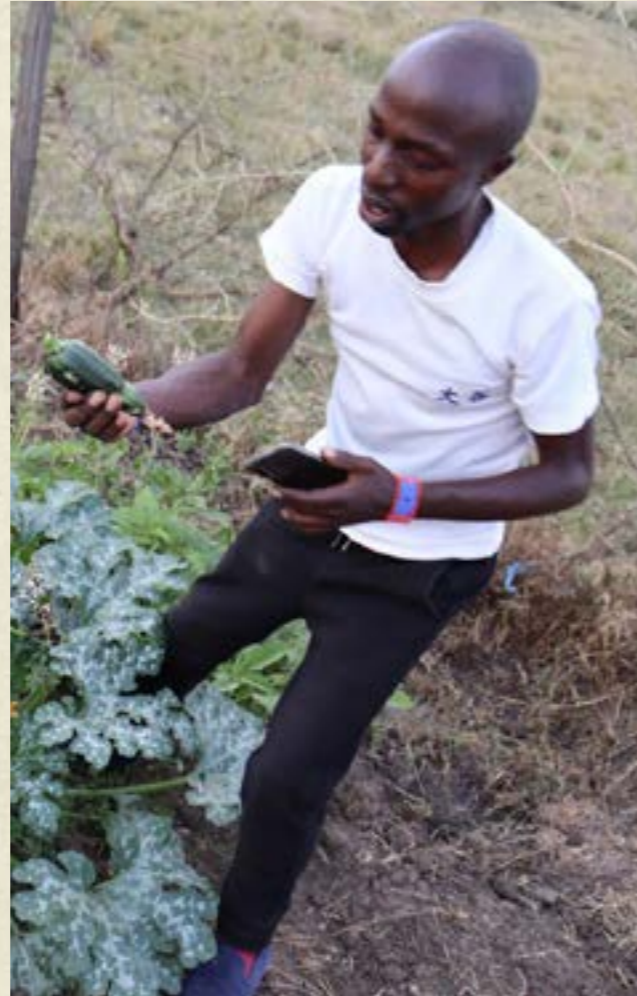
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A real-time passion helps students learn and have fun during COVID-19 pandemic

George Rop is using a kitchen garden to teach

A teacher by profession, farmer and cook by passion. What can't George Rop do? If you visit Irbaan primary school and its environs, you probably know Rop and chances are he's fed you.



"I was brought up in a farm. Everyone I knew was a farmer including my father," he says. "I'm passionate about photography and spices. And, these two have fit perfectly with my interaction with the students over the last few months."

When the schools closed abruptly due to the ongoing global pandemic, a directive from the government was issued for teachers to start a community learning program at their stations of work to teach learners in open spaces. This was when Rop borrowed an idea he had started back in his hometown Nakuru on building a kitchen garden. He would ask his students, both former and current, and, who are members of the wildlife club to assist him in setting it up. This proved to be a great bonding session for both teacher and his students.

He not only introduced them to new vegetables such as cucumbers, eggplants, pig weed and courgettes but also taught them how to prepare it and, to top it off, organized a cooking competition. That means, the students worked hard and were fed at the end of the day, talk about motivation. I bet there were never dull days with this lot.

After all there's an old saying, usually attributed to Confucius, that goes something like "Give a man a fish, and you'll feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you've fed him for a lifetime." There's an important life lesson in that simple statement that Rop emulated. A number of these students are now proud farmers by their own right. Not only that, but the produce from this same kitchen garden was also used to feed teachers and students (grade 4 and class 8) at the time.

Being the jack of many trades that he is, Rop again, introduced rabbit rearing into this farm. This proved particularly beneficial to the wildlife club members whose knowledge on species identification was increased as they were now able to differentiate between a hare and a rabbit. Rop has plans on marrying rabbit rearing and farming through the harvesting and use of rabbit urine as fertilizer to the vegetables.

His sacrifice both economical and physical is not only complementary to the school curriculum but wholesome in terms of bringing together a community in an interactive and fun way and teaching them other ways of sustainably feeding themselves. An SDG 2 accomplishment on promoting zero hunger and improved nutrition.

As a school patron to the wildlife club he notes that "wildlife clubs in Masai Mara are more active with the many activities available as compared to the other schools I have taught outside this county." George Rop, your service hasn't gone unnoticed and you are appreciated.



In Mara Girls Leadership School, being a member of the wildlife club is a highly coveted spot

“We unfortunately have to limit the number of girls joining the wildlife club because this is a small school and other clubs need members too,” says the bubbly wildlife club patron, Sarah.

strong advocate to the non-members in the school for environmental protection and wildlife conservation. “Trees are forever. I encourage all students to plant now to reap fruits later.” Furthermore, “Working with these members is fulfilling. Knowing we are not just doing it for this generation but the next to come brings me so much joy,” adds Sarah. Sarah, we salute you for your dedication to the members. It is our hope they continue to inspire you and many others.



Wildlife club members from Mara Girls Leadership School

When asked to talk about some students who are members of the club that she has interacted with, she fondly recalls of Anita. She talks of how surprised she was taken when Anita won an art competition that was mostly dominated by boys. She couldn't believe how talented this particular girl was. To date, her drawings are a prized possession in her school and visitors are often amazed at her drawings of wildlife in the Mara. Some visitors even ask to take pictures of her art. Sarah is happy that the wildlife club provided an opportunity for her student to excel in her talent.

With a feeling of great remorse, she is sorry for the people who aren't wildlife club members because they are missing out on a chance to actualize their God-given responsibilities on taking care of the environment. However, she is still a

Mercy Kosen's vision

“Five years from now looks amazing, I will be someone who stands for animals' safety. I will tell everyone on the importance of conserving the environment.”



This happy young lady was inspired by her father who is a tour guide in Masai Mara. He always brought back home pictures he had taken from the field excursions and together would analyze them as the big animal fans they are. What an amazing daddy-daughter duo! You can bet she took the opportunity presented at school for her to join the wildlife club. From observing how they walk, feed their young ones and how they protect themselves from predators, Mercy has enjoyed the game drives in reserves.

We continue to cheer you on Mercy. You go girl!

Alex Ledama reflects on his wildlife club membership

“I can for sure now see myself becoming this big ambassador in the near future.”

When this serious young man's friends and family found out he's a member of a wildlife club, questions on wildlife came streaming in; which in turn continuously make Alex happy to answer them. As he recalls his first memory on a wildlife club trip, he can only equate it as a chance of lifetime.

In that trip, he not only felt honored to be a part of it but was excited to be seeing wildlife he had only read about or heard of. And, to think his school patron is the one person who saw his potential of becoming a wildlife ambassador and influenced him to join the club.



Sophy Kummum follows her own rules

“I’ve never really been influenced by anyone to join the club but that’s because I’ve always had this passion for teaching people about mighty things concerning the wildlife.”



While on club trips, Sophy has met amazing men and women who have not only taught but involved her in some wildlife conservation practices such as showcasing cases of how communities can get involved in waste paper collection. After her last club trip, she was inspired to involve more people in what the club does and has since recruited her father in reducing his paper wastage in an effort to maintain a clean environment back at home.

Could Jane Mereru be the next Wangari Mathai?

“I want to make my environment green by planting more trees.”



Mereru simply has always wanted to know how to better conserve the environment and wildlife and so she joined the wildlife club at her school. This was with encouragement from her classmates who wanted to see her fulfill her dreams. With interactions from game rangers and tour guides, she has seen ways in which she can improve and actualize her brilliant ideas on making the environment green.

In this women’s history month, we are proud to see the legacy of Wangari Mathai continue in you Jane.

Dominic Sakat travels through time

The community liaison officer narrates his observations, hopes and vision he’s had and still has for the wildlife clubs



It all started in 2014 when the first ever school art competition was held in Masai Mara. Students from schools were asked to draw what anything based on what they think and feel about wildlife. It was from this competition’s shocking results that 5 schools began the wildlife clubs with a total of 150 children as its first registered members.

“One child drew a lion being speared,” says Dominic. “This revealed to us that the only encounter these children had with predators was when they attacked livestock. We knew then we had to do something to change this.”

A defining moment he’s had in his time with the members was when a boy called him one day to alert him of an incident happening in his home and what he did to dissuade an unnecessary kill. A baby eland had wandered off from its mother and wound up in the family’s livestock. They wanted to kill it but the young boy boldly persuades them not to. He used his voice, though little, to teach his family why it is important to maintain biodiversity and allow nature to take its course. This wildlife club member saved the eland calf and imparted knowledge on his family.

Over the years, such incidences have continued to give hope to Dominic on what the future of wildlife conservation might look like. “It is my hope that, that through these kids, human wildlife conflict can be better mitigated.” Recalling yet another similar scenario was when they took members on the first game drive. Visibly scared kids were unable to enjoy the desired ‘African safari’ by many. This has since changed, as more relaxed and comfortable kids now ask questions about the wildlife they see in these game drives.

The consecutive art work competitions held clearly showed a change in perceptions of the club members as seen in the arts drawn from the time they knew them as problematic to now worth while of protection as it attracts tourists.



With limited time to work with the members, Dominic continues to liaise with school patrons and has now managed to cement a day dedicated to the club in each of the nine schools. A notable growth from 150 to 347 registered members.

Apart from the club activities, some CSR exercises are great avenues to motivate the children and parents in being advocates of wildlife conservation.



“Donating to this worthwhile cause can and will help us expand our outreach areas and include more children in conserving the Great Mara ecosystem.”

Did you know?

Dominic Sakat was a teacher and certified tour guide prior to his current role. Talk of a perfect fit as the wildlife club officer.

